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ABSTRACT

These activity cards represent a way for teachers to supplement the content of the curriculum with activities that address the concept of conflict. Students become aware of conflicts in their lives and discover individual methods for coping with those conflicts. The cards contain action-oriented activities to enable students to learn through active participation and first-hand experience. Each card presents a conflict concept based on identified objectives of the unit and then provides opportunities for application of the concept to other real life or personal situations. The cards are loosely arranged in ascending order according to the objectives and can be adapted to fit different age groups and students. Objectives include: (1) recognize and identify various kinds of conflict; (2) discover the presence of conflict in every day life; (3) recognize the presence of power, emotion, and violence in conflicts; (4) identify and understand all sides of a conflict; (5) accept responsibility for one's actions in conflict situations; (6) practice negotiation skills; and (7) generate alternative ways of resolving or coping with conflict. (EH)

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CONFLICT ACTIVITY CARDS

GRADES 6-8

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CONFLICT ACTIVITY CARDS

These conflict activity cards represent a simple but effective way for the classroom teacher to supplement the content of her/his curriculum with activities that address the concept of conflict. Conflict is present at every level of people's lives and is encountered every day. Using the cards will help students become aware of conflicts in their lives and help them discover individual methods for coping with conflict. The concepts learned and skills acquired can be expanded outside of both the students' personal lives and the classroom, and can be applied to family, community, and world situations.

The cards are action-oriented to enable students to learn through active participation and first-hand experience. Each card is formatted to first present a conflict concept based on the seven objectives listed below ("TRY THIS"), and then to provide further applications of the concept to other real life or personal situations ("MORE"). The cards are loosely arranged in ascending order according to the following objectives, from recognizing and identifying conflicts to generating viable alternatives. Each card can be easily adapted to fit different age groups and most of the objectives below.

The basic objectives of this book are to provide activities which teach students to:

1) Recognize and identify various kinds of conflict;
2) Discover the presence of conflict in every day life;
3) Recognize the presence of power, emotion, violence, etc. in conflicts;
4) Identify and understand all sides of a conflict, including distinguishing between the internal, the interpersonal, the intergroup and the international, sides.
5) Accept responsibility for ones actions in conflict situations;
6) Practice negotiating skills; and
7) Generate alternative ways of resolving or coping with conflict.

The conflict cards provide an opportunity for teachers to individualize classroom instruction and learning. They allow for flexibility in curriculum planning and learning pace, as well as freedom in choosing class activities. Although the cards are intended as a supplement to an educator's regular curriculum, they can be used occasionally, as issues of conflict arise naturally in the classroom. or intensively, as a special unit on conflict. The flexibility of these cards makes them applicable to every field of study at any time during the year.

There are many possible ways to utilize these cards. For instance, the cards can be discussed as a class or in small groups, individual students may be assigned specific cards, or students may browse through the cards to choose activities of particular interest to them. Some cards recommend activities outside the classroom, which should be encouraged if possible to help the students internalize a particular concept. There are many ways to learn the concepts on these cards, the activities provided are only suggestions. Students should be allowed and encouraged to expand the activities on the cards in their own creative fashion.

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TRY THIS: Brainstorm five different kinds of conflict and list the differences between them.

MORE:

* Find historical examples of each kind of conflict.

* Write five or more possible endings to the conflicts.

* List words or phrases that describe each conflict.

* What is a "conflict of interest"? What are some examples of conflicts of interest?

TRY THIS: How do you know when a conflict is occurring?
How do you know when:

-- your parents are fighting?
-- someone has won a disagreement?
-- someone disagrees with someone else?
-- you have lost (or won) an argument?
-- someone has more power or authority than you do?

MORE:

* Keep a record of class conflicts.

* Find out the causes of the particular conflicts.

* Discuss alternative ways to resolve the conflict.

TRY THIS: Become an observer for a day. Choose a specific day and watch the interactions that go on around you. Try not to get involved, just observe. Explain what you are doing to your family and friends, so they will understand your behavior. Keep a note pad and pencil with you to record:

1) What kind of interactions did you see?
2) Did any involve conflict?
3) What was the conflict about?
4) Was the conflict resolved? How?

MORE:

* Do any patterns develop? What are they?

* Were any of the conflicts avoidable? What would you have done to avoid them? Were any of the conflicts necessary or beneficial? In what ways?

* Present a report to the class describing the types of conflicts and resolutions that you observed.

* Read the newspaper and answer the same questions listed above for articles you find involving conflict.

TRY THIS: Identify a common conflict at school and have the students act out the different roles in the conflict. Have a class discussion after the role play and discuss other ways of solving the problem.

MORE:

* Have one person outside of the conflict act out one of the roles.

* Have two people outside of the conflict play the roles. Discuss with the class what was different.

* How is the role play situation different from real life?

TRY THIS: Make a journal about when conflict happens to you. Include:

- Day/Time
- With whom
- State of being (tired, hungry, etc.)
- Location
- Ease of resolution (possible scale of 1-5)

Keep track of the conflicts you have for a period of time. See what, if any, patterns develop.

MORE:

* Compare your journal to those of other students. What similar patterns can you find? What are the differences?

* How big a role did the above factors play in initiating or preventing conflicts?

* How could this information be of use to you in resolving or preventing future conflicts?

* Ask your family and close friends to keep a journal too. Do you notice any differences between your journal and the one you wrote with your family/friends?

TRY THIS: Using an outline map of the world, plot major areas of conflict. Use a key to indicate the areas of high conflict versus low and moderate areas of conflict. Can you find any commonalties among the areas of high conflict? (Example: location, climate, economic, political).

MORE:

* Research some world conflicts and see where they fit in your map. Do the origins of the conflicts correlate to reasons suggested in your map? Why or why not?

* Make a conflict map of your home, school or city showing areas of high and low conflict.

* Using this information, is it possible to prevent some of these conflicts?

TRY THIS: As a class, select a controversial issue (e.g., drug or alcohol abuse, or carrying weapons to school). Brainstorm with a partner the conflicts surrounding the issue. Why are there so many problems with the issue? Show how the issue affects the individual, family, friends, community and society as a whole.

MORE:

* What role does peer pressure play in this issue? What other problems involve peer pressure? Discuss with the class how the power of peer pressure could be reduced. When is peer pressure good?

* Who should be responsible for these problems? What should be done to correct them?

* Make a diagram or flow chart showing all the individuals and groups which are affected by this issue.

TRY THIS: Divide the class into groups with each group in "control" of unequal portions of the property and space in the classroom. Throughout a normal day see what types of conflicts develop. How are the conflicts resolved?

MORE:

* What happens when ownership of space or an object is in dispute? In what ways can these conflicts be resolved?

* Describe the ways people let others know they own something. Find new ways to let people know you own or control something.

* What are good examples of conflicts caused by a misunderstanding of who owned or controlled something?

* What should you own or control at home? Do your parents agree?

TRY THIS: Divide the class into groups of five. Give each group three M&M's. The M&M's may not be broken. How will you as a group decide who gets them? Will it be by chance? Will it be a reward for someone who does something? How did the students who did not get M&M's feel?

MORE: * Think of something with more value. What would be some ways of deciding who would get it?

* Design a treasure hunt. Let the students decide how to divide the treasure among their own groups and among the groups that did. not find any treasure.

* Make posters that depict the word "compromise." (Examples: children sharing a candy bar, half a loaf of bread is better than none, breaking a piece of chalk in half so that each student gets one piece, etc.

TRY THIS: Break into small groups and discuss how to handle the following scene. After lunch, everyone has given you money to pay the bill, but you are short $5.00. What should you do if:

1) You are a stranger in the group.
2) You have paid your share and have no money left.
3) Everyone is beginning to leave.
4) You invited everyone.
5) You are sure your best friend did not contribute enough.
6) You think one person is too poor to pay.
7) The total amount on the bill was miscalculated.

MORE: * What differences do the above situations create in how you handle the conflict? Should you always act the same regardless of with whom you are in conflict?

* In small groups, find other situations in everyday life that could be conflict oriented. What circumstances could alter the situations? Role play the scenes in front of the class. Discuss whether there are any patterns that develop.

* List all the conflicts that people have that involve money. If you had all the money you needed, what conflicts, if any, would you face?

TRY THIS: "Sara" and "Jenny" have been best friends since the second grade. Sara has been involved in drugs for one year. Sara's parents called Jenny to ask if Sara was taking drugs. What should Jenny do?

MORE: * How could your decision hurt Sara? How could it help Sara? Make a list of the pros and cons for each possible solution.

* Discuss the differences between friendship and the law. Discuss the differences between friendship and moral values. When is one more important than the other?

TRY THIS: Compile the conflicts that might happen in one day if you were the President of the United States, a Roman slave, an outlaw, a Native American or African chief, or any other person in history.

MORE:

* How did your person achieve her/his goals? Did s/he prevent others from achieving their goals?

* How did your person deal with conflicts? Write a poem, a story, or draw a picture explaining your person's strategy.

* Select a person in your family, your school, or your community. Compare his/her conflicts with your historical person's conflicts. What is similar or different about their situations, styles, resolutions?

TRY THIS: Pick someone who is not a close friend or with whom you do not usually get along. Pleasantly surprise them by your actions. Record their reactions. What happened?

MORE:

* Do people usually get treated differently based on how close of a friend or how much of an enemy they are? Why?

* How do enemies usually communicate with each other? Why do you suppose people remain enemies?

* Trace the steps that occurred when a friend became an enemy. How could your enemy become your friend?

* Discover how different national groups have become a friend or an enemy of the United States at different times in history.

TRY THIS: Discuss what people do not like about their country, town, school, house, etc. What should be done to change these situations? Is there agreement about what needs to be changed and how to go about change? What are the differences between the end goals and the means used to achieve those goals?

MORE:

* Find out who is responsible for the things people do not like and who is responsible for making changes to those things.

* Find a similar conflict in the newspaper. Who has tried to change things? Were they successful? What did they do right, what did they do wrong? Who was opposing them?

* Take a poll at school. Ask what most needs to be changed. Find out if changing it is possible. Would such change be bad? Why or why not?

TRY THIS: Decide where a new school, park, animal pound, library, or other public attraction should be built in your neighborhood. Find out where parents, teachers, neighbors, and public officials think it should be built. What conflicts arise?

MORE:

* Find out who in your community is responsible for administering building permits. How are permits awarded?

* What are some of the problems that can be encountered during the construction process? How can these problems be avoided?

* Research a public site in your neighborhood. Find out who decided to build it, who opposed the building, who financed the building, etc. Write a report and present it to the class. Submit your report to the local newspaper to get printed.

TRY THIS: Ask students to write a definition of conflict and describe their feelings about conflict. Share and discuss the definitions the students have written, then combine them to form a class definition of conflict. Compare the definition you have written to the dictionary definition. Ask the students to share their feelings about conflict. Are they usually proud, angry, defeated, or happy about conflicts?

MORE: * Ask the class to describe as many different kinds of conflict as they can. List them on the board. Have each student categorize the conflicts according to the feelings they provoke. The categories could be: Happy, Indifferent, and Angry.

* Compare some of the above responses. Why do the same conflicts provoke different feelings for different people?

TRY THIS: Write about the first time you got into a physical or verbal fight. Were you hurt? Was the other person wrong? Did the fight feel good? How did you feel after the fight? Could the fight have been avoided? How?

MORE:

* List five things about which you would be willing to fight. What are the consequences if you choose to fight? How would this affect your friends, family, and teachers?

* Are there any conditions where you would not fight for your family, friends or country? Describe them.

* What other ways could you get what you want besides fighting? Explain why fighting may be beneficial.

* Make a newspaper that shows what people have been fighting about during the last week.

TRY THIS: Write about a real or imaginary situation where another student verbally harassed you. What was it about his/her words that bothered you in this situation?

MORE:

* Make a list of words that can hurt other people's feelings. Are these words always offensive or only in certain situations?

* How do people know when what they are saying is offensive? What happens when they do not know? Should they know?

* Put yourself in the reverse role, imagine that you are the one harassing another student. How does this role make you feel? How do you think it affects the other student?

* Keep a list of all the put-downs you hear during one day. Do any patterns develop? What are they?

TRY THIS: Have two people act out a conflict situation without speaking. Ask the rest of the class to guess the nature of the conflict.

MORE:

* How does body language communicate conflicts? What gestures were used to show anger, frustration, or agreement?

* Was the class correct in their interpretations? How did they figure out the nature of the conflict?

* Try to act out a conflict without using any body language. What happens?

TRY THIS: What color is conflict? What color is peace? Draw each of them. What emotions are present in your drawings? Explain.

MORE:

* Are different kinds of conflict different colors? Are different solutions different colors? Which colors and why?

* Can looking through "rose-colored" glasses cause conflict?

* What conflicts today are caused by color? (Skin color is an example). How can these conflicts be resolved?

TRY THIS: Make a list of some of the most powerful people in your life, in school, in the world. How do these people use their power? What conflicts do you have with these people? How do you think these people resolve their conflicts?

MORE:

* What do these people have in common? Are they older, bigger, wiser, etc. than you or most people?

* What are the clues that a person is powerful? Look at dress, language, money, personality, etc.

* Find out if these people think they have as much power as you think they do. How do you know?

* Which is the most powerful country in the world? Explain.

TRY THIS: Find pictures of the use of force or violence. Does violence settle a conflict? Increase it? Decide when and where violence works and does not work.

MORE:

* If someone wins using violence, does that person also lose something?

* How can you achieve your goals without using violence?

* Discuss how people in history, such as Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr. used nonviolent tactics to resolve conflicts.

TRY THIS: Look for the humor in conflict situations. Check the newspaper comics. Which strips portray an ongoing conflict in a humorous way?

MORE:

* What makes the comics funny? Which cartoons involve humor using put-downs or sarcasm? Which use another type of humor?

* Choose an area of conflict and design your own cartoon character to deal with it in a humorous way. Create a comic strip with your characters in the conflict. Draw how they resolve the conflict.

* List several recent conflicts of your own. Search for the humor you might have missed. How might it have helped you resolve the conflicts?

TRY THIS: Select a conflict of recent importance in the news. Keep a notebook of newspaper and magazine clippings from a variety of sources that address your conflict. Compare the different views from different sources related to your conflict. Which sources represent which views?

MORE:

* Compare your findings with your classmates' findings. Are certain sources consistently representing a specific view?

* Does the media sometimes add "fuel to the fire" in conflict situations? Would some situations have less conflict if the media did not intervene? List some examples. What steps could the media take to help modify a possible conflict rather than enhance it?

* Discuss the pros and cons of the constitutional right of free press.

TRY THIS: Take a current controversial issue and outline the two opposing sides. Identify your own position on this issue and research the opposing position. With your new information, argue for the side with which you do not agree.

MORE:

* How does learning the background of an opposing side help you with your own arguments? Does this make you any more sympathetic to the other side's arguments?

* Could you use this process in mediating between two opposing factions on any modern day issue? On conflicts in your everyday life? Give examples.

* Debate the issue as a class.

TRY THIS: Choose an article from a newspaper or magazine in which two people or groups have a conflict. Identify the two sides of the conflict and write a letter to the person or group with which you agree the least, explaining why you disagree.

MORE:

* Write a letter to the person or group with which you agree the least and suggest possible solutions. How could this group compromise? Make sure your proposal is genuinely fair from their standpoint.

* Write a letter to the person or group you agree with and explain how they could compromise to help solve the conflict.

* Role play a solution to the conflict. Choose a mediator and allow two students that support either side of the issue to play the parties involved.

TRY THIS: What things in life can and cannot be changed? Select a conflict at school, at home, or in the community. Brainstorm a list of five things you can change to avoid the conflict and five things you cannot change.

MORE:

* Make a similar list for an inner conflict. Are there things you could change about yourself to avoid these, or other, conflicts?

* What should you do about things you cannot change in some of your relationships with adults. How do you usually deal with these conflicts? Is avoidance a possibility? Why or why not?

* When dealing with issues of world conflict, are there aspects of cultural diversity that we cannot or should not change. How can we work around these obstacles?

TRY THIS: Discuss the following scenario as a class. A member of your group refuses to do their share of work and wanders to another group. Discuss in small groups what should be done.

MORE:

* What consequences do this person's actions have on your group? On the other groups? Is this person aware of these consequences?

* What would be the least effective way to solve the problem? The most effective? Why? Should you handle the situation yourself or tell the teacher?

* Role play the situation.

TRY THIS: Draw cartoons of name calling, pushing in line, stealing another person's pencil or lunch money, bothering others in class, etc. Fill in the dialogue and possible solutions. Discuss who is responsible for each action in the cartoon.

MORE:

* Draw a few different solutions to the problem. Which solution do you think works best?

* When you have a problem with others, how can you take responsibility for your actions? How do your actions help or hurt the situation?

* Develop a single character who learns how to take responsibility for her/his problems over time, perhaps during the course of the school year.

TRY THIS: Change the attitude "climate" at home, school, or work by anonymously "committing acts of kindness" for one week. (Try this on people other than close friends.) Take note of reactions and feelings when your kind acts were discovered. Write down your reactions each day after you have completed your kind act.

MORE:

* At the end of the week, compare your perceptions with what you wrote at the beginning of the week. Has the "climate" changed?

* How significantly did your actions alter the "climate" of your classroom, home or school? What responsibility do you hold personally in sustaining or ruining certain "climates?"

TRY THIS: If you were the teacher in the class and you could have only five rules to help prevent conflict, what would they be?

MORE:

* As the teacher, explain how you would handle students' physical conflicts, verbal conflicts, and students who talk back to you.

* What types of conflict would not fit under the five rules? What should the teacher do to solve these conflicts?

* Discuss why there is a need for rules. Think about what people's lives would be like if there were no rules.

* Do countries need rules when they deal with each other? Why? What are these rules?

* Cut out newspaper articles of people following or not following the rules. Discuss what makes people break the rules.

TRY THIS: Choose students to play the role of the principal or assistant principal. Have these students go outside of the room while the teacher presents a recent conflict to the rest of the class. When the students return, have them solve the problem from the principal's or the assistant principal's perspective.

MORE: * Have other students play the role of the principal/assistant principal and think up solutions to the following scenes:

1) Parents have unrealistic academic expectations of their child.
2) An aunt tells you the parents are abusing their child.
3) An angry parent comes to school to settle an argument with their child that began at home.

What other instances can you think of that the principal should be involved with?

* Have the principal/assistant principal come into the class and tell the class how s/he solves problems. Have a community leader or another teacher come in and describe how s/he solves problems.

* Are there similar problem-solving strategies used by the principal, community leaders, and teachers? What are they? Could you use them to solve your own problems?

TRY THIS: Identify a conflict and use the steps of problem solving to work out a solution:

1) Identify the conflict.
2) Understand the conflict.
3) Develop a plan of resolution.
4) Carry out the plan.
5) Look back to see if the conflict was resolved.

MORE:

* Give examples of how these five steps could be used to solve everyday problems.

* Pick a problem within your school, such as vandalism, and work out a solution using this process.

* Can you use this process with an inner conflict?

TRY THIS: Brainstorm ways that individuals solve conflict (avoidance, violence, compromise, etc.). Discuss the pros and cons of each method. Which method works best most of the time? Is there ever a controversy over which method to use? Why?

MORE:

* Select a conflict and role play solutions several times using the various methods mentioned in class. Which method was most constructive in generating an acceptable solution for all parties? Why were the other methods not as constructive?

* Select the most constructive method and use it to resolve all your personal conflicts for a day or a week. Was this beneficial? Can you always use the same method of conflict resolution? Why or why not?

TRY THIS: Write various conflict situations on index cards. Break the class into groups and give each group a card. Have them list as many solutions as they can for that conflict. Exchange cards and repeat the process until each group has worked with each conflict. Create a "master list" of possible solutions for each situation. Have students keep track of how many times a solution is repeated.

MORE:

* Use the information from the "master list" to graph the solutions and show which ideas were the most popular.

* Make posters illustrating the most popular resolution methods. For example: if compromise was the most popular method, collect photographs or drawings of people compromising in school, at home, or in the community.

* Groups with opposing solutions should choose one that they feel strongly about and debate the issue.

TRY THIS: Write a conflict, in which you have recently been involved, from your point of view. Rewrite the conflict from the other person's viewpoint. Write solutions that would be acceptable to:

1) party "A" but not to party "B"
2) party "B" but not party "A"
3) both party "A" and "B".

MORE:

* Write about a conflict in which you were persuaded by the other person to change your mind. Why were you convinced?

* Write about a conflict that you had when you persuaded the other person to change her/his mind. How did you convince her/him?

* Make two lists: one of the things you think people should not do to get what they want and one of the things people should do to get what they want.

* Is it always good to get what you want? Why or why not?

* Analyze newspaper articles for a week. Do certain groups always get what they want? Which ones and why?

TRY THIS: Each student should write down, on separate pieces of paper, a real or imaginary conflict with a parent, a friend and a teacher. Divide the class into small groups. Each group selects one of the conflicts to role play. Where more than one solution to a conflict arises, have the groups role play the different solutions. As a class, evaluate the different solutions and decide which one was most appropriate.

MORE: * Are there better solutions to the conflict than the ones chosen when role playing? Discuss the reasons for choosing a certain solution. Are there circumstances when that particular solution might not be the best choice? What are they?

* Research some historical conflicts. Discuss alternative solutions to the conflict. Was there a "better" way to resolve these conflicts? Write a report describing how life would be today if the conflict had ended differently (e.g., if Germany had won World War II).

* Chose an issue or conflict that has recently been in the news but is still unresolved. Predict a solution.

TRY THIS: Watch a television program. Identify a conflict depicted and explain how it was resolved.

MORE:

* Identify other points of view about the conflict in the program.

* Discuss whether or not you feel the TV conflict and its resolution were "real life" situations. Why or why not? If not, what would be a "real life" solution?

* How would your family or friends resolve the conflict?

* Tape record another TV program. Watch the taped program and stop the tape before the conflict is resolved. Solve the conflict before seeing the end and write down your solution. Finish watching the tape and compare the two solutions.